

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 272120Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1323

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 6125

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EC

SUBJECT: SUB-SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT DEFENDS GOE ACTION IN ARREST  
AND EXPULSION OF FOREIGN PRELATES

REF: (A) QUITO 5857, (B) QUITO 5974

1. SUB-SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT, XAVIER MANRIQUE, APPEARED ON A NATIONAL TELEVISION NETWORK THE EVENING OF AUGUST 25 TO JUSTIFY THE ACTION THAT THE GOE TOOK AUGUST 12 IN BREAKING UP A BISHOPS MEETING IN RIOBAMBA AND DETAINING ITS PARTICIPANTS. IN A STRONGLY WORDED STATEMENT, MANRIQUE ONCE AGAIN SUPPORTED THE GOE CONTENTION THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO INVOLVE FOREIGN PRELATES IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ECUADOR. MANRIQUE SPENT MUCH OF HIS TIME QUOTING FROM DOCUMENTS, LEFTIST IN TONE, THAT HE CLAIMED WERE WORKING DOCUMENTS FROM THE MEETING WHICH SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT'S CLAIM. HIS COMMENTS WERE REPORTED VERBATIM IN THE PRESS OF AUGUST 26.

2. IF IN SAYING "THE GOVERNMENT OF ECUADOR DISCARDS ANY POSSIBILITY OF A POLEMIC . . ." MANRIQUE INTENDED THE GOE TO HAVE THE LAST WORD ON THE SUBJECT HE MUST HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED TO READ FRONT PAGE COVERAGE IN THE PRESS OF AUGUST 27 OF ANSWERING REMARKS BY PABLO MUNOZ,  
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ARCHBISHOP OF QUITO. MUNOZ REPEATED THE CHURCH'S EARLIER

DEFENSE OF THE MEETING, SAYING THAT THE PURPOSE HAD BEEN ESSENTIALLY RELIGIOUS. DISCUSSION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS, ADDED MUNOZ, IS A LEGITIMATE ROLE OF THE CHURCH, AND IS NOT INTENDED AS INTERVENTION IN POLITICS. MUNOZ TOOK STRONG EXCEPTION TO MANRIQUE'S STATEMENT THAT MANY OF THOSE ATTENDING THE RIOBAMBA MEETING "WERE NOT WORTHY OF STEPPING ON ECUADOREAN SOIL."

3. LOS ANGELES BISHOP JUAN ARZUBE, WHO IS STILL IN ECUADOR, TOLD POLOFF AUGUST 26 THAT THE DOCUMENT MOST CITED IN THE MANRIQUE PRESENTATION HAD NOT BEEN A WORKING DOCUMENT AND THAT IT HAD, IN FACT, BEEN DISTRIBUTED JUST PRIOR TO THE POLMFE RAID. ARZUBE SAID THAT THE DOCUMENT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SUMMARY OF AN INTRODUCTORY SESSION ON CHURCH ACTIVITIES IN RIOBAMBA THAT HAD BEEN PRESENTED EARLIER IN THE MEETING BUT ADDED THAT THE DOCUMENT WAS MUCH MORE DETAILED THAN THE LECTURE ITSELF HAD BEEN.

4. QUITO'S LEADING DAILY, EL COMERCIO, EDITORIALIZED ON AUGUST 27 THAT ALTHOUGH THE GOE MIGHT HAVE ACTED IMPROPERLY, THE PRIESTS MEETING IN RIOBAMBA WERE CLEARLY EXCEEDING THE BOUNDS OF PROPER RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY. THE PAPER CONCEDED THAT A POSITION IN FAVOR OF THE POOR WAS POSSIBLE FOR THE CHURCH, BUT ADDED THAT SUCH A POSITION SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH PLANNED COMMUNIST SUBVERSION. "BISHOPS AND PRIESTS CONVERTED INTO POLITICAL INSURGENTS CAN BE THE MOST SERIOUS OF ANTI-SOCIAL ELEMENTS."

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH CRITICISM OF THE GOE ACTION AGAINST THE RIOBAMBA MEETING CONTINUES, WE BELIEVE THAT IT WILL NOW FADE. ALSO, WE BELIEVE THAT MANRIQUE'S TELEVISION APPEARANCE HELPED HIS CASE SIGNIFICANTLY. BLOOMFIELD

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